

**REMARKS:**

Careful consideration has been given to the Official Action of July 16, 2003 and the Advisory Action of February 23, 2004 and reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner has rejected claims 15, 16, 18, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b) as being anticipated by Watts et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 2,766,998). Claims 15-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Galle (U.S. Pat. No. 5,570,911) in view of Watts et al..

Claim 15 and 21 have been amended. New claims 22-29 have been added and are fully supported by the specification and the drawings. Thus, no new matter has been introduced.

Claims as now presented are distinguishable from the cited art as will be explained in detail hereafter.

One essential feature of the present invention is that the sealing arrangement comprises a smooth, radially facing, cylindrical, outermost lying support face 22 to provide a continuous gliding support surface for the end face 14a of the stem 14 directly against the outermost lying support face 22. This allows a sliding movement of the sealing ring relative to the armature members during mounting and ensures effective sealing in various axially displaced sealing positions after mounting (page 8, first paragraph).

As shown in figure 11, a space may be provided between the stem 14 and the armature members 15 and 16. This space in combination with the smooth outermost support face 22 allows a sliding movement of the sealing ring relative to the armature members along the conical faces 21 and 25 during expansion / contraction that may occur after mounting (paragraph

bridging pages 15-16).

Additionally, the armature members are provided with end guide faces 19 and 23 facing respective end sealing faces 15b and 16b for contact therewith. A space may also be provided therebetween to allow sliding movement of the sealing ring during expansion / contraction after mounting.

In contrast, Watts et al. disclose a sealing arrangement comprising a first armature member 18 having interior threads 20 which threadably engages a metal sealing ring having exterior threads 26. This sealing arrangement does not provide a smooth, continuous gliding support as provided by the present invention. Further, there is no space between the stem and the armature members once the seal is completed and there would be no sliding movement of the sealing ring after mounting.

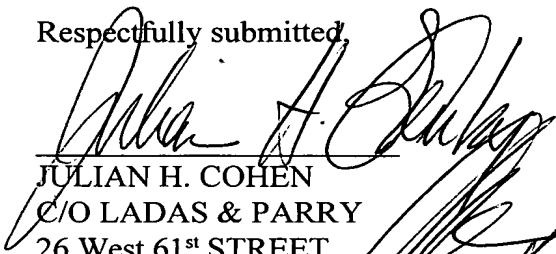
Galle discloses a sealing ring that is held at a fixed position by a retainer 47 to reduce the possibility of a misalignment between the first and second armature members and the sealing ring as the armature members are brought together to complete the seal. Hence, there would be no sliding movement of the sealing ring during or after mounting, and no smooth, continuous gliding support is provided.

Claims as now presented recite a smooth outermost lying support face (22) that extends continuously in axial direction and provides a continuous gliding support surface for the end face (14a) of the stem (14) directly against the outermost lying support face (22). This is clearly distinguishable from the cited art as explained above.

New claims 22-29 are directed to the various features which further distinguish from the cited art.

On the basis of the above action and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the application is in allowable condition and favorable reconsideration is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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